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Staggers Urges House To Cite CBS

United Press International

Declaring that network television has the capacity to manipulate elections, Rep. Harley O. Staggers (D-W. Va.), urged the House yesterday to approve contempt-of-Congress charges against CBS President Frank Stanton and the CBS network for defying a demand for unused film from a news decumentary.

A vote on the unprecedented attempt to cite a network for contempt is expected next week — probably Tuesday. Approval could prompt Justice Department prosecution and eventually a supreme court confrontation.

In a 2,700-word letter and statement to all House members, Staggers, who is chairman of the Commerce Committee, said the "American viewing public" bases its votes on information it obtains from its "most prominent news source — the television set.

"The raw naked power to manipulate by gross fabrication the input data is the power to manipulate, however well intentioned, the decision-making process of the American electorate."

CBS has claimed that the unshown film from the documentary, "The Selling of the Pentagon," is the equivalent of a reporter's notes and is protected from subpoena by the First Amendment.